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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF SECRETARY

Mr. Reed Hundt
Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

VIA FAX

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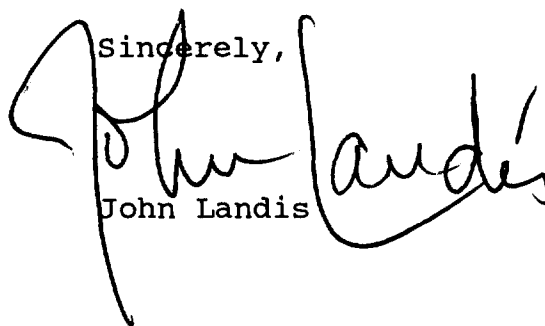
Dear Mr. Hundt:

Please add my voice to those who have spoken out
against the ACATS proposal for a 16.9 aspect ratio standard
for television.

This is a stupid and destructive premise, insulting to
all filmmakers on the planet.

Please don't let a few individuals attempt to make some
money destroy the life's work of so many great artists, and
cheat the American public.

Sincerely,


John Landis

JL/sd

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September 25, 1996

The Honorable Reed E. Hundt, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW
Room 814
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As you know, the Commission now has before it a vital question regarding the future of television in the United States. Pursuant to a recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Advanced Television Service (ACATS), it is considering whether to mandate that all broadcasters conform to a specified technical standard for digital television.

While this issue has so far received little attention outside the telecommunications world, it is more than just a minor technical dispute. Tens of billions of consumer dollars and potential viewer services are at stake.

We believe this issue presents the Commission with a clear choice between two very different models of regulation. The proposed ACATS approach would continue the old practice of subjecting the broadcast industry to strict, government-mandated technical standards, such as those developed by the National Television Standards Committee in the 1940s and 1950s. Such mandatory, inflexible standards are likely to be quite harmful in the quickly-changing communications world of today.

In effect, the proposed mandatory TV standard would freeze into law today's notion of what is feasible, preventing the use of technologies or techniques that may not yet even be envisioned. While the ACATS standard does, to its credit, contain some degree of flexibility, it is unreasonable to assume that it accommodates every possible future innovation. The direction of innovation, almost by definition, is unforeseeable.

Supporters of the ACATS standard say a mandate is necessary to ensure compatibility between television transmissions and receivers. Without a required standard, they argue, the industry will face a classic "chicken-and-egg" problem that will prevent or severely delay the development of advanced television.

The Honorable Reed E. Hundt
page 2

This argument ignores the fact that the vast majority of other consumer electronic products -- with a similar need for compatibility -- have been vastly successful without any government-mandated standard. Personal computers, CDs, and VCRs, just to name a few, have succeeded in the marketplace without mandates.

Moreover, the fact that the ACATS standard currently enjoys consensus support in the television industry also decreases the likelihood of a "chicken-and-egg" problem. The ACATS standard can quickly become a *de facto* industry standard, assuming that it does -- as its supporters argue -- provide what consumers want.

In conclusion, rather than require the use of such a particular standard, the FCC should allow the marketplace -- through voluntary standards -- to determine how this new service will be provided. In this way, digital television could be delivered while the prospects for further innovation are encouraged, to the benefit of U.S. consumers and viewers.

Sincerely,

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